



George Washington & Jefferson National Forests
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FOREST SERVICE CONDUCTS PRESCRIBED FIRE IN WYTHE COUNTY

MARION, VA – The Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, plans to treat portions of the George Washington and Jefferson National Forests in Wythe County with prescribed fire. The 1120-acre burn will take place on the Mount Rogers National Recreation Area near CC Camp Road (Forest Service Development Road #14), Virginia Highlands Horse Trail #337, and Horse Heaven Trail #4009. The exact date of the treatment is weather dependent, but will likely occur between February 27th and April 30, 2011. With a commitment to human safety serving as the number one priority, the purpose of the prescribed burn will be to improve wildlife habitat, to promote a healthy forest ecosystem, and to reduce wildfire risk.

Prescribed burns will only be ignited if wind speed and direction, temperature and humidity lie within prescribed parameters that optimize firefighter's ability to control the fire. Fire Management Officers ensure firefighters are well trained, equipped, and prepared to perform effectively and safely. Firefighters will use handheld drip torches and aerial ignition by helicopter to ignite the burn. Weather conditions should disperse smoke rapidly, but residents of surrounding areas may see and smell light smoke, especially in the mornings and evenings.

The George Washington and Jefferson National Forests are dependent on fire to remain healthy and to provide optimal habitat for a diversity of plants and animals. Species such as white-tailed deer, black bears, squirrels, and eastern cottontails benefit from a healthy forest habitat that flourishes in the wake of a prescribed fire. Without natural understory fires, shade-loving species like red maple and white pine, outcompete oak and pine seedlings for available light and food. Without fire, a pine or oak-hickory forest becomes a different forest over time; one dominated by maples, white pines, and other species which do not provide the wildlife habitat many species depend on.

For more information, please contact the Mount Rogers National Recreation Area at 276-783-5196.

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The mission of the USDA Forest Service is to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the Nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations.